

HANNEY, Rick

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SCULPTORS

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# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Rick Harney

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection







CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

JUDY MARKOWITZ, MAYOR

## Abe Lincoln sculpture 'wonderful gift' to city

A big "Thank you, Mayor Judy," for the wonderful historic sculpture of President Abraham Lincoln on the courthouse square (in Downtown Bloomington).

The bronze figure of Abraham Lincoln sitting and relaxing on a bronze bench is special. I sat down and looked into Lincoln's eyes and I was so overwhelmed as it seemed Mr. Lincoln was looking right into my eyes.

Every parent should take their little ones and have them sit on the bench with President Lincoln's arm around them. What a wonderful memory that would be in the children's future.

I want to thank Mayor Judy (Markowitz) and the sculptor, Rick Harney, for the most wonderful gift of President Abraham Lincoln to the City of Bloomington. Everyone in McLean County should take a few minutes and stop and relax on the bench and enjoy our beautiful city.

Loretta Kelly  
Bloomington

*This letter was also signed by Mary Kelly.*

**July 9, 2000**

**Rick Harney  
6 Ardith Drive  
Normal IL 61761**

**Dear Rick,**

**Thank you for your interest and willingness to take on the Lincoln Bench. I am just as thrilled each time I ride by and see people around it, as I was when I watched it lifted into place.**

**For you it must be like your baby. The love, the care, the finessing, the pride. But certainly the thrill must be knowing what pleasure it will bring to so many who will come to sit next to Mr Lincoln from now til forever. I cannot imagine how you must feel, knowing already how in love with it the people of this community are.**

**I doubt there will ever be a more memorable decision I make in my days as mayor that the decision to give that bench to the community. Certainly nothing has made me more proud.**

**I will forever treasure the memory of this experience, from start to finish. Thank you, Rick, for your very beautiful work of art.**

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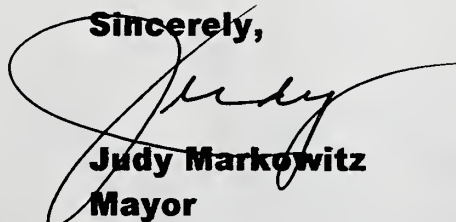
309.434.2302 fax

For Hearing Impaired

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on equal opportunity  
employer

**Sincerely,**



**Judy Markowitz  
Mayor**



Tulie,

Here's some local ink on the project.

Don't forget - \$50,000 (cheap)

includes delivery!

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See SESQUIL, Page A4



The Pantagraph/DANA L. HOBACK

Alyssa Shaneman, 4, gave Abraham Lincoln a hug from behind soon after the unveiling of the new Lincoln bench on the east side of the McLean County Museum of History during Bloomington's sesquicentennial celebration on Saturday. The event continues today.



The Pantagraph/DANA L. HOBACK

Several people swarmed the bench on Saturday to get a photo or rub Abraham Lincoln's nose right after the unveiling ceremony of the bench.



# LAND OF LINCOLN: Have you snuggled next to Abe yet?

**H**e sits there day and night, that comforting smile washed across his face, either gazing out at the downtown buildings across the way or possibly pondering a State Farm life policy, especially considering he now lives for eternity in the 11-story shadow of the insurance giant's western facade.

Yes, Abe. More specifically, we refer to the new, lifelike, beautifully crafted—and *endlessly* sat upon — Abe Lincoln bench in Downtown Bloomington.

At night, he gets a rest. Finally. At least, he rests after commerce has ceased as well.

"You know," muses Rick Harney, its sculptor, "he's probably had a few visitors who after the bars have closed have sat down with him for — shall we say — a less-than-historic pose."

Remember the words: Four stores and seven beers ago.

But by day? Abe has become a 24-hour photo op. It's been almost non-stop, in fact.

Since July 1 when, as a personal gift to her lifelong city, Mayor Judy Markowitz

(it's said to have personally cost Her Honor \$30,000) had Abe lowered by boom crane onto his eternal spot out on the lawn, visitors have flocked upon the bench to cajole, cavort, commiserate, communicate and also conjure a Kodak moment.

A house divided cannot stand and neither can Abe.

So he just sits. For pictures. Endlessly. Snap. Cackle. Pop.

"It's been incredible, frankly," says David Hauman, at the McLean County Museum of History on whose east lawn Abe relaxes, "I have seen more people — and particularly kids — sit on his lap, look up into his face, stare into his eyes. It's been by the hundreds, if not thousands, of people who've posed for pictures. Some folks I've noticed have even talked to Abe. Now, whether they hear something back, I'm not in a position to know that..."

**EVERY CITY** OF any weight has its signatures.

In Seattle, it's that Needle. NYC has Empire State. St. Louis is rimmed by its famed non-fast-food Arch.

Bloomington now has one, too. A butt magnet.

## Bill Flick



Everyone wants to sit next to Abe.

"I guess we have the Macarena of Lincoln sculpture right now," chuckles Harney humbly.

Yes, already Abe's done more sittings than a greeter at Olan Mills.

Already, he's done as many laps as Santa Claus on Dec. 23.

Our Abe may well be the first *sitting* president to have endless visitors who, instead of carrying out presidential business, tweak his nose, fawn for his folded right knee, nuzzle an ear, fold into his shoulder for an especially intimate shot and don't even have Kenneth Starr across the way at Blimpie's ready to impeach him.

"When Judy first said she wanted (the creation) to be interactive," says Harney, "I knew it needed to be a little different. With apologies to the George Bushes, I knew our Abe needed to be a little kinder and a little gentler. We fudged a little on history, too, because Lincoln didn't have a beard when he practiced here. But Judy felt he had a warmer feel with a beard, so we added one. I wanted a rather wry smile as opposed to that middle-of-the-Civil-War-depression-look he wore."

"I wanted to make him look like an Abe that you just wanted to sit down next to and cuddle up. It makes me feel really good now to see that we apparently succeeded."

And how.

On one recent afternoon, in just an hour's swath, Janeane Fisher of Bloomington had her three lads — Jeremy, Jason and Walker — saddle up and bare teeth with Abe for a picture.

Ferdie Rodriguez of Normal and his cousin, Cordero, then got off their bikes to fidget on the bench and inadvertently whack Abe in the loins.

Matt Kieseewetter was next to grab some bench with Abe.

"Other afternoon," adds David Hauman, "I happened to look out and see a mature couple pull up in their car and just sit and stare at it. They drove all the way downtown just to stare."

And so a legend grows, which Hauman predicts will turn this bench into an icon, a draw, a touchstone.

"I had a minister friend," says Harney, "who said he looked at my Abe and said his body language seemed to say — 'My battle is over, come join me now' — and that's pretty much what I wanted to communicate. I wanted to capture his peace."

Yes, the Great Emancipator is finally free himself. Give or take an occasional inadvertent knee whack, of course.

Bill Flick is a Pantagraph columnist. To leave him voice-mail, call CITYLINE at 829-9000 and punch category 2400. By e-mail: flick@pantagraph.com.



Abe and Matt Kieseewetter.

The Pantagraph/DANA L. HOBACK



[Print this page now](#)*The Pantagraph - Bloomington IL*

Friday, September 30, 2005

## Work to start on Lincoln statue

**By Karen Walters**

pontiac@pantagraph.com

PONTIAC -- In less than a year, Abraham Lincoln will be standing on the Livingston County Courthouse lawn.

Sculptor Rick Harney and The Lincoln Statue committee announced Wednesday that work would begin on the life-sized statue of the former president in the next week and they expect the statue to be on the lawn by June.

The committee has raised more than half of the \$45,000 needed to construct the statue. The statue will depict Lincoln leaning against a split rail fence. Fund-raising efforts will continue with the addition of bricks for sale, said group member Barb Sancken.

The statue will be located on the south side of the courthouse to the east side of the sidewalk. Previous plans had the statue on the east side of the courthouse.

Harney said he will start working on the actual statue Wednesday. He has already completed some preliminary work, including a small clay model and a working with a person and fence similar in size as the statue.

The group hopes the statue also will become a draw for tourists.

The committee gave Harney the money needed to start the project, which they hope to unveil during Harvest Days.

Bricks sold will be engraved and then used to create the walkway to the statue. The bricks range from \$100 to \$5,000. Those who have already donated more than \$100 will receive a brick.

The project began when Sancken told the Dialectic Society about Lincoln's time in Pontiac and Livingston County.

Harney created the Lincoln statue on the McLean County Museum of History, along with statues of Adlai Stevenson and Minor Myers Jr.

Lincoln traveled to Livingston County while he was a lawyer traveling the local circuit. When he was 31, he opposed Stephen A. Douglas in the first case tried in the county.

Lincoln spoke at the Pontiac Presbyterian church in 1860. He stayed at 401 W. Livingston St., a home that still stands today.

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## Statue of Lincoln to honor visits

By Karen Walters  
[kwalters@pantagraph.com](mailto:kwalters@pantagraph.com)

PONTIAC Abraham Lincoln once talked about how a child looks at the White House and wishes one day to become president.

Now, a statue of the 16th president may have the same influence on the children of Livingston County.

"Kids can come and look at it and ask questions," said Barb Sanken, a member of the Lincoln Statue Committee. "Lincoln's visits to Pontiac and Livingston County will no longer be lost history."

A life-size bronze statue of the president will be unveiled in two weeks on the south side of the Livingston County Courthouse. A group of residents has worked for about two years to raise the money.

"It is going to be very exciting," said committee member Dee Woodburn. "People from all over the county really helped to make this happen. It'll be there forever."

Efforts to erect the statute began after Sanken, a lifelong Pontiac resident, researched local history and found Lincoln came to the area several times while he traveled the legal circuit as a young attorney.

From 1840 to 1860, Lincoln was in the county several times. He was one of the lawyers in the first case tried in Livingston County, was among travelers who were stranded in a snow storm, once spoke at the Presbyterian Church, and spent the night at a house on Livingston Street that still stands.

Lincoln's funeral procession train went through Pontiac in 1865 on its way to Springfield.

The statue will depict Lincoln in his 30s, leaning against a split rail fence with a coat draped over his arm. The statue will be positioned so visitors can stand next to it for pictures.

The brick courtyard for the statue already has been laid. Engraved bricks were sold to help raise the money; larger bricks share a timeline of Lincoln's visits.

More than \$70,000 was raised in the effort. Small bricks are still available for \$100 donations.

Sculptor Rick Harney, who completed the Lincoln statue on the McLean County Museum of History lawn, started work on the statue last year. It will be unveiled during the ceremony.

The dedication ceremony will include Lincoln's history in the county and patriotic music.

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## Plaza planned for home of Pontiac Lincoln statue

*By Karen Walters*  
*kwalters@pantagraph*

PONTIAC - A plaza will be created to give an Abraham Lincoln statue a permanent place on the Livingston County Courthouse Square, and the public is being asked to help pay for it.

The life-sized bronze statue of the country's 16th president will depict him as a young lawyer in his 30s, the age he was when he visited Livingston County.

The statue is the centerpiece of a two-year project in which the Lincoln Statue Committee is promoting awareness of the county's link to the famous president. Organizers also hope it will tie Pontiac into Lincoln-related tourism across Central Illinois.

"We want him to look the way he did when he visited here. It is lost history," said committee member Barb Sancken, a lifelong county resident who said she didn't know Lincoln had been in the county until she did research.

The committee continues to raise money for the statue and plaza, which will feature benches, engraved bricks and lighting at night. The entire project will cost about \$70,000, of which half has been raised so far.

Large bricks have to be ordered by March 15, smaller ones by April 15.

Brick cost \$100 to \$5,000 depending on the size. Committee member Dee Ingles said the bricks can be engraved with any message, including Lincoln quotes or statements honoring family members or groups.

The statue will be on the south side of the courthouse, and the committee hopes to unveil and dedicate it this summer.

"The granite bricks will create a plaza for people to sit and reflect on him," said Ingles. "It will be permanent piece of history. It will be a large area."

When Lincoln was 31, he opposed Stephen A. Douglas in the first case tried in the county. The pair went on the face each other in campaigns for the U.S. Senate and the presidency.

Along with practicing law in the county, Lincoln spoke at the Pontiac Presbyterian Church in 1860. He stayed at 401 W. Livingston St., a home that still stands today.

The statue will depict Lincoln leaning against a split-rail fence.

His long-sleeved shirt will have the top button open, and he'll be wearing a loosely hanging bow tie and vest. A long coat will be over his arm, and a watch chain will dangle from a vest button to a pocket.

His signature hat will be resting on the fence.

Sculptor Rick Harney started working on the actual statue in September, when the committee gave him the first payment. He had been working with a small, clay model and with a person and fence the similar to the size depicted by statue.

A wax model has been completed.



Harney also created the Lincoln statue on the McLean County Museum of History lawn in Bloomington. Like that sculpture, the Pontiac one will be designed to allow people to pose with it.



# Daily Leader

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## Lincoln statue unveiled

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Some 160 years after his initial arrival in Livingston County, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, has returned to the scene where he made his mark as a young lawyer.

This time he will be staying permanently due to the efforts of some county residents who worked to bring a life-size statue of Honest Abe to stand on the southeast side of the Livingston County Courthouse lawn as a reminder of Lincoln's ties to the county.

Four years after after an idea for the statue was formed, Lincoln evolved into the 6-foot-4 bronze statue that was unveiled Friday at during a 6:30 p.m. ceremony.



Members of the Lincoln Statue Committee remove the cover from the Abraham Lincoln statue during the unveiling ceremony Friday evening at the Livingston County Courthouse. The 6:30 p.m. ceremony preceded Friday's Pontiac Municipal Band concert.

Lincoln's statue was placed on Tuesday, June 13, but was covered until Friday's dedication. Lincoln Statue committee member George Knudsen presided over the half-hour ceremony at which Livingston County Coroner Mike Burke detailed some of Lincoln's trips through the county.

After Burke's presentation, members of the Lincoln Statue Committee unveiled the statue before a crowd of hundreds around the square.

Sculptor Rick Harney created the 1,000-pound, cast bronze statue, which shows a 31-year-old, thin and beardless Lincoln, standing and leaning against a split rail fence, a coat draped over his right forearm. Lincoln was 31 when he first started coming to Pontiac in



1840.

The statue will remind residents and visitors of Lincoln's connection to Pontiac, and his visits here between 1840 and 1860. As a lawyer, he practiced law in Pontiac on numerous occasions, including a case during the first regular term of Livingston County's Circuit Court, on May 18 and 19, 1840, only three years after the county was established. On a number of those occasions Lincoln's opponent in the courtroom was Stephen Douglas, the man whom Lincoln faced in numerous historical debates.

The Lincoln Statue Committee held a brick-selling drive for businesses, organizations and individuals to have their thoughts inscribed on the ground below Lincoln.

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HARNEY, R. C.

POWER 21a

SCULPTORS

